

SERVICE INSTRUCTIONS FOR NATIVITY (CHRISTMAS) 2016 FROM HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN JOSEPH

The Royal (Great) Hours and Typika are served on the morning of **Friday, December 23**, which is the day BEFORE the Paramon (Eve) of Christmas. Therefore, we sing the Apolytikion of the Forefeast: *Be thou ready, O Bethlehem...* (*Nassar, p. 369*). The Royal Hours and Typika may be offered in either of the following orders:

- **Consecutively**, starting at 9:00 AM in the following manner: start the First Royal Hour with “Blessed is our God”, and OMIT the Dismissal at the end of each Hour (except the last), and OMIT the section between “Blessed is our God” to right before “Come let us worship” in the Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours. **SIMPLY PUT, OMIT THE BOXED PORTIONS OF THE TEXT.**
- **At their usual times** (6:00 AM, 9:00 AM, Noon and 3:00 PM), with the Ninth Royal Hour and Typika being served at 3:00 PM. If desired, **Daily Vespers (without an Entrance) for the Paramon (Eve) of the Feast and for our Righteous Mother Eugenia** can be celebrated immediately after, or in the early evening hours.

The Priest performs the Great Censing of the entire church at the start of the First and Ninth Royal Hours, and the Small Censing from the Beautiful Gate (Holy Doors) – like he would before the Great Entrance in Divine Liturgy – at the start of the Third and Sixth Royal Hours.

NOTE: We do **NOT** celebrate Divine Liturgy on Friday, December 23. Our Patriarchate of Antioch reminds us that this is the last strict fast day before the Feast. We follow this same pattern at Pascha: Royal Hours are served on Holy Friday (a day of strict fast), and Divine Liturgies are celebrated only on the weekend (never a time of strict fast).

On Saturday morning, December 24, we can celebrate Daily Orthros and **Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom** for Christmas Eve (Paramon).

On Saturday evening, we celebrate **Great Vespers but without the Liturgy**, with the entire triple stases of scriptural readings and antiphons, etc., as provided. Remember, in this service the Entrance is with the Gospel Book, since the Gospel is read in this Vespers (even without Liturgy). The Service of the Litia-Artoklasia ought to be celebrated as well.

On the morning of Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25, we serve Festal Orthros and **Festal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great** at the usual Sunday times.

AN ALTERNATIVE

Although His Eminence's strong preference is that churches open Sunday morning as usual, pastors can use their discretion—after careful consideration and research as to when the most people can attend—and offer Festal Orthros AND Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Saturday night, December 24. Parishes cannot offer a Vespers Liturgy at all. With this alternative, they would not offer the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom on Saturday morning, but they could offer Great Vespers instead.

Please thoroughly review the Nativity Texts for 2016 well in advance of their use in the parishes. They will be available for printing during the Nativity Fast at:

<http://www.antiochian.org/online-liturgical-guide>